



Traumatic Brain Injury

The story of ABC reporter and anchorman Bob Woodruff and his recovery from a traumatic brain injury, has brought a lot of public, congressional and media attention to the VA's treatment of traumatic brain injuries (TBI), especially for veterans returning from recent service in Iraq or Afghanistan. Hines VA Hospital, designated as one of the VA's level two Polytrauma Centers, is successfully treating service members returning from service with TBI injuries every day.

"We have treated approximately 23 veterans with traumatic brain injuries, most of whom are much less severe than the injury suffered by Bob Woodruff," said Dr. Monica Steiner, the leader of the Hines Polytrauma Team. "We are ready and able to treat these complex injuries here at Hines."

According to Steiner, Hines is currently conducting TBI screening for all returning veterans who present to the facility or one of the community-based outpatient clinics for treatment. Each returning veteran is screened for a possible traumatic brain injury and a consult is placed to the Polytrauma Team if the screening is positive. Veterans are also referred to the Polytrauma nurse for detailed screening and directly to the Polytrauma clinic. The Hines Polytrauma Team is led by Dr. Steiner and Dr Querubin, who specialize in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. The team includes many specialized disciplines, including but not limited to rehabilitation nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech



Members of the Hines Polytrauma team pictured are: Arnold Canete, Laura Kulawiak, Amanda Sobel, Gerald Schutter, Debbie Johnson, Amanda Urban, PhD, Melanie Querubin, MD, Joanne Milas. Also on the team, but not pictured are Ron Balogh, David Labash, Emily Garza, Denise VanKoevering, Nimisha Collins, MD, Father James Burnett, Dinah Banks, Theresa Pape PhD, Roger Kelsch and Ivy Bryant.

and language pathology, recreational therapy, prosthetics, neuropsychology, blind rehabilitation outpatient specialist, psychiatry and a chaplain. The Hines Polytrauma Team has received extensive training, both locally and nationally during the past year. The training focused in special needs topics such as TBI, amputation rehabilitation and blast injury. The Hines team also visited the VA's Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center in Minneapolis to get a first hand look at the great care being provided at one of the VA's four Polytrauma Centers.

"The formation of the Hines Polytrauma Team has allowed us to develop an expertise in TBI by identifying skilled providers and providing them with intense education," Steiner said. "We have also identified experts from the VA system and from the local medical community to participate in educational activities and to serve as resources. We have state-of-the-art Telehealth

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access to the Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center at the Minneapolis VA. This is a great resource.”

It is exciting to note that Hines is also a test site for what will become the nationally released TBI clinic reminder. This reminder, which was turned on March 7th, asks providers to screen all returning veterans for head injury. The reminder asks questions such as exposure to blast, loss of consciousness, and symptoms related to a head injury. If this reminder is positive, then a consult is placed to the Polytrauma Team and further evaluation is completed.

With the increase in public and media attention on the area of VA’s TBI treatment and support, Steiner points out it is important that patients feel confident that when coming to the VA for treatment of a traumatic brain injury, that they will be receiving top quality care.

“Veterans and their families who come to Hines for treatment of a traumatic brain injury will not find a specific area of the hospital that is a Polytrauma Center,” Steiner said. This is because Polytrauma patients have varying clinical issues and are treated in the area that is most appropriate to their specialized care needs. “However, the Polytrauma team follows each case closely and coordinates care so that these patients receive top quality care at our facility. The Polytrauma Team and all the staff at Hines are proud to provide our returning veterans with top quality health care.”

Network News

Hines

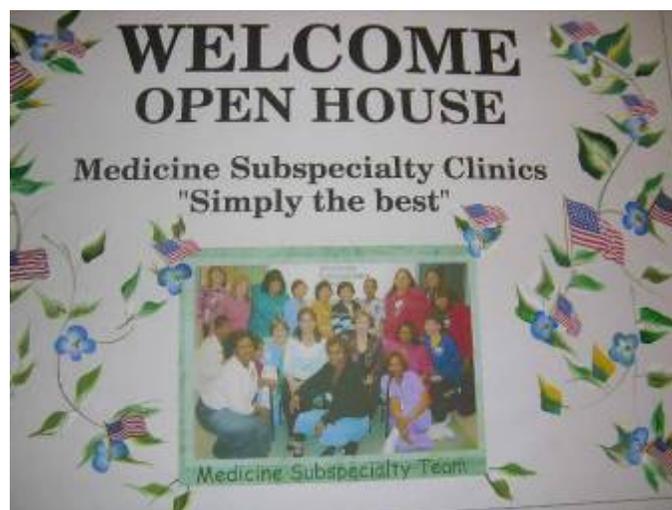
New Construction and Remodeling Improves Environment of Care

Hines is undergoing a number of construction and modernization projects as part of the facility’s commitment to provide patients with newer, more modern, user-friendly facilities in which to receive their care. The Women’s Health Clinic and PAT (Pre-Admission Test) area are now in new locations. Women’s Health has been temporarily located in Building 200, the main hospital, while awaiting

renovation of the 12th floor for their permanent newly-remodeled site.

PAT has been moved to Building One, E-105. The move was made to facilitate patients processing through PAT the same day a decision is made for the patient to have surgery. With its adjacent location to the surgical clinics, the goal is to reduce a second visit for the patient having surgery in addition to increased coordination of care. This is also a temporary location for PAT as Surgical Service has begun plans for the renovation of the 5th floor to house all the surgical clinics.

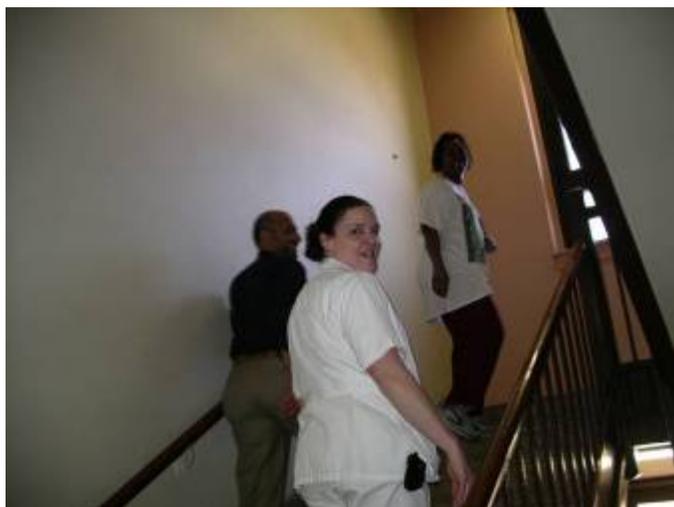
In the last several years, Hines has completed construction on the new Blind Rehabilitation and SCI Centers, and relocated and remodeled the primary care and subspecialty outpatient clinics to the main hospital. Both of these new clinics serve a very high volume of patients in a very professional and user-friendly environment. New Eye and ENT Clinics, as well as a new Surgical Intensive Care Unit (SICU) have also been opened recently.



Ongoing construction projects at the facility include modernizing and expanding the Emergency Department, remodeling and relocating the Operating Rooms, opening a new Medical Intensive Care unit (co-located with the new SICU), complete renovation and remodeling of two acute inpatients wards, renovation of all passenger and service elevators in the hospital, construction of a new Angiography Suite and the purchase of a new MRI Machine.

Fitness Walkers

Hines Nutrition and Food Service is sponsoring daily fitness walks for employees at the hospital Monday through Friday during the lunch hour. As part of the Healthier US Vets program and National Nutrition Month, the walks are part of an overall program at the facility encouraging employees and veterans to eat healthy and get exercise. Employees are also encouraged to take the stairs whenever possible and Nutrition and Food Service is offering employees a free nutrition analysis of their diet during the month of April.



Hines Employees take the stairs as part of National Nutrition Month.

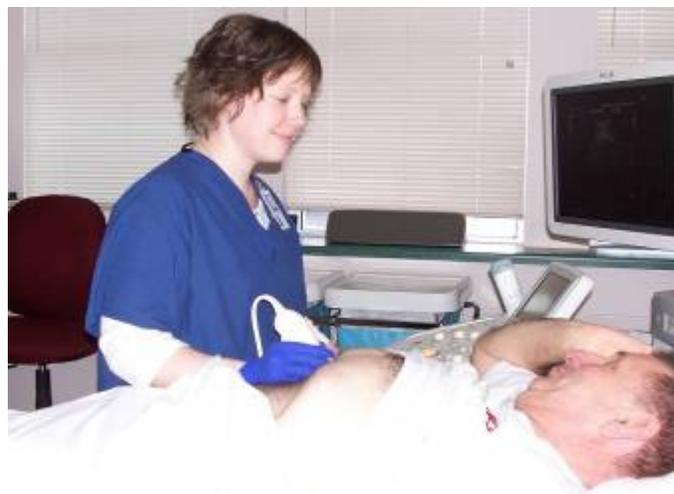
Iron Mountain

Patients Again Rate the Care Given as Superior!

Veterans throughout the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and Northeastern Wisconsin have spoken – they are very satisfied with the care received at the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center and its six Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). The Fiscal Year 2006 4th quarter outpatient and Fiscal Year 2006 3rd and 4th quarters inpatient veteran survey results have just been released. There was an amazing response – 692 veterans took time to fill out a very lengthy survey. Over 85% of the veteran responses scored the services provided as above the national average. In many cases, scores were significantly higher.

The Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients (SHEP) is conducted monthly to assess satisfaction with VHA healthcare. The survey focuses on the Veteran Health Service Standards, a general measure of satisfaction with care, and provider wait times. Veterans from our region note that they are particularly pleased with the following areas:

- **Emotional Support
- **Access
- **Education and Information
- **Pharmacy Services
- **Preferences
- **Overall Quality
- **Courtesy
- **Physical Comfort



Erin E. Mundy, RDMS, R.T.R., Ultrasound/Echocardiogram Technician performs an ultrasound test on a patient who states he is very satisfied with the care given at VAMC Iron Mountain. VAMC Iron Mountain performed 2,796 ultrasound exams in Fiscal Year 2006.

VHA consists of over 850 CBOCs and 142 medical centers. The average score for quality across VHA is 78% for both inpatient and outpatient. By contrast, VAMC Iron Mountain's overall quality score is 87% in inpatient and 86% in outpatient. The facility has reason to be very proud of the care it gives to the veterans.

One of the great advantages of having veterans return the surveys is that the organization has the capability to

drill down into areas in need of improvement. Each quarter, this data is scrutinized by the facility and appropriate action is taken. When veterans take the time to fill out the survey, the Iron Mountain VAMC listens and makes improvements.

Several of the Community Based Outpatient Clinics were given the honor of being named top performers in the nation. The Hancock, Ironwood, and Sault Ste. Marie clinics led the nation in one or more of the surveyed domains of care for Fiscal Year 2006.

Janice M. Boss, medical center Director states “VAMC Iron Mountain is always striving to provide our veterans with top notch care along with great customer service. It is apparent from the veteran’s response that we are doing a very good job at meeting their needs both physically and emotionally. I am very proud of our staff and their commitment to caring for our veterans.”

Jesse Brown

New Way Finding System

Veterans with appointments at Jesse Brown VAMC will find it easier to locate their clinics, following the medical center’s overhaul of its way finding system. A new directional system has been established that uses a color-coordinated approach to assist veterans, visitors and other guests to find their clinics and rooms.

Each of the walls by the elevator banks of each building (which will be referred to as pavilions under the new system) will be painted in a different color. Veterans will be able to find each pavilion easily by following the corresponding colored dots with directional arrows on the floors of each hallway. Following a suggestion by staff, corresponding color stripes were also painted on the walls to make it even more convenient to follow. The medical center also plans to install new signage in the same color schemes for each pavilion.

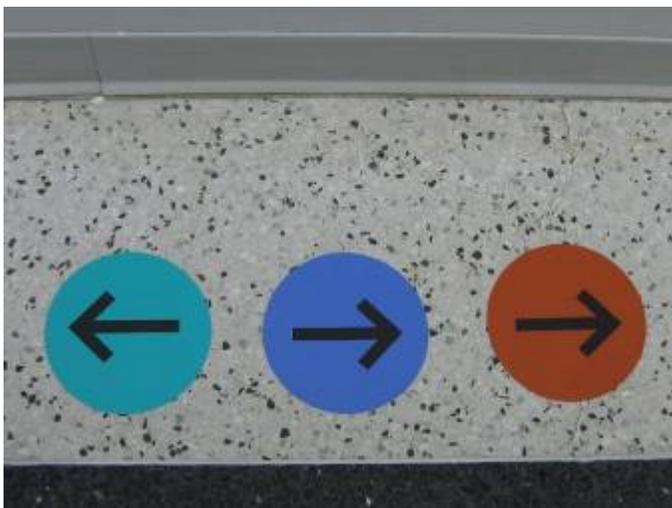
The color code for the medical center’s Damen building, which includes all inpatient beds, will be rust. The middle (Ogden) building, where Prosthetics, Audiology & Speech Pathology, Mental Health Clinic and the Eye Clinic, are located, will be color-coded blue. The Taylor

Street building, which includes the Addictions programs, Social Work Service and Voluntary Service, will have the color code of emerald.



John Walsh, JBVAMC Engineering Service, paints a series of color-coded strips on the pillars along the walls of the medical center as part of its new directional way finding system.

“Previously, all the buildings had one uniform signage color,” said Rick Mickelsen, JBVAMC’s Interior Designer. “Patients often were unsure of which elevator bank they had to use. This makes it easy for them to follow the appropriate color towards the correct set of elevators, which will also be color-coordinated.”



Patient appointment letters, as well as medical center brochures and informational handouts, are also being updated to include the new color-coordinated directions for veterans to follow.

Closed Circuit TV Channel Launched

On March 1, Jesse Brown VAMC was pleased to introduce its new patient health education channel (Channel 29), which provides accurate and up-to-date health information for veterans and their guests. The television programming is available in patient rooms and waiting areas 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Programming on the channel covers a wide spectrum of topics, including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, cancer, nutrition, smoking cessation, health/wellness and other healthcare information. The goal of the channel is to educate patients and their families and to increase their awareness of medical issues and treatment options. The medical center hopes the information provided will stimulate communication between veterans and their healthcare providers, improving the patients' abilities to make informed decisions about their care.

In addition, Channel 29 will be used to communicate announcements and activities currently happening within Jesse Brown VAMC. The medical center will give its clinical program areas the opportunity to videotape public service announcements and otherwise promote

their services for veterans. Medical center Director, James S. Jones, also plans to regularly broadcast information about the medical center via the closed-circuit TV channel.

A cable guide is being distributed each month to provide a listing of the programs offered on Channel 29, which will be replayed frequently to offer multiple opportunities for viewing.

Bears Day



Chicago Bears fans at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center (above) and Crown Point CBOC (below) wore their team colors when Bears Day was proclaimed on February 2. Alas, it didn't help as their team was defeated in the Super Bowl by the Indianapolis Colts.



Miss Iowa Visit



Jesse Brown VAMC patients were pleased to welcome Miss Iowa (Emily Nicholas) to the medical center on February 23. Miss Iowa visited all seven of the medical center's inpatient and residential units and teamed up with a group of veterans to sing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." Here she is seen visiting with veteran Robert York.

Patients Have Fun with National Nutrition Month Activities

JBVAMC's Nutrition & Food Service uses a variety of innovative methods to provide dietetic and wellness information to patients and staff. That is one reason it always looks forward to National Nutrition Month as an opportunity to offer nutritional news in a fun and interactive manner. Activities scheduled this year included:

- Two Food Drives resulted in the donation of almost 3,000 pounds of food, including 2,000 pounds by Crown Point CBOC staff, which was given to local food banks.
- "Tuesday Tastings" – samples of exotic fruits – that were offered every Tuesday during the month of March near the hospital's main entrance.
- 20-minute walks held every Tuesday and Thursday at 7:30 and 11:30 a.m. (co-sponsored by the medical center's Employer of Choice Committee), with a

National Nutrition Month water bottle awarded to one lucky walker each week.

- An Apron Decorating Contest, in which medical center services competed against each other to decorate aprons using the 2007 National Nutrition Month theme "100% Fad Free".
- A "Better for You" bake-off in which contestants prepared either a sweet or a savory dish they had modified from an original recipe to make it healthier. Members of top leadership at JBVAMC tasted each dish and served as judges.
- The medical center's annual Nutrition Fair on March 29, which attracted a crowd of veterans by providing samples of nutritional food items like sodium-free seasonings and high-fiber cereals, as well as handouts containing nutrition information.

Madison

Research Studies

Did you know that many of the doctors and scientists at VA Madison lead research studies? Their extensive research program includes investigations of cancer of the lung, skin, prostate, and bladder; sleep apneas; asthma; tuberculosis, pulmonary edema, and pneumonia; diabetes; kidney disease; bone strength; heart disease; obesity; high blood pressure; substance abuse; post-traumatic stress disorder; vein grafts; Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia; effects of diet on aging; anticoagulation; wound healing; epilepsy; muscle pain; brain injury; stroke; swallowing difficulty; and intravenous feeding.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs awards grants to fund some of these studies. Some studies invite patients to participate as research subjects. These are great opportunities to "do your part" to help further scientific and medical discoveries. Other research projects study laboratory research animals (mainly mice and rats). Finally, other projects are conducted entirely in laboratories, where human or animal cells are grown and analyzed. In 2006, about 60 Madison researchers

were working on over 200 projects with \$3 million of VA funding and \$8 million of non-VA funding.

In May, they plan to hold a one-day Research Fair at the hospital, to which veterans, hospital employees, volunteers, and the public are invited. Some research exhibits will offer a chance for hands-on activities. There will be easy-to-understand posters about current research, informational research flyers, brochures on health topics (such as heart disease, prostate cancer, etc.), an overview of how people participate in research studies, take-home “gadgets” and giveaways, great door prizes, refreshments and more! Researchers will also be on hand to discuss various research topics. They hope the Fair will be both fun and interesting. This will be a wonderful chance for people to see how VA doctors and scientists are studying ways to find better treatments for their patients.

Heart Health Fair



A Heart Health Fair was recently held at VA Madison. Along with presentations on Nuclear Cardiology and Electrophysiology, displays with information and interactive discussion regarding a variety of topics related to cardiac health were available.

Milwaukee

Reclaiming Our Heritage- A Unique Way of Affirming the Commitment

For the past six years, the Milwaukee VA Medical Center has hosted a special event called “Reclaiming Our Heritage” the weekend after Memorial Day. The Medical

Center’s purpose in hosting Reclaiming Our Heritage is to honor veterans of all military eras and educate the public about the sacrifices and contributions veterans have made — and continue to make — to American society. The event attracted an estimated 15,000 from the community in 2006 — many of whom were veterans. Reclaiming Our Heritage is a great way to offer benefits information and VA updates to large numbers. Reclaiming Our Heritage is sponsored by the Soldiers Home Foundation.

The 2007 Reclaiming Our Heritage will be held the weekend of June 2nd and 3rd and is free. The event is preceded by the Civil War School Day on June 1st. The School Day is targeted to 5th graders from throughout the metro Milwaukee area where the students in 5th grade study the Civil War. The School Day is an opportunity for teachers to make history come alive as the children learn from reenactors who recreate military life from this time period.



The School Days bring history alive at Reclaiming Our Heritage on the Milwaukee VA Medical Center historic campus. Students sit attentively as they listen to the embalmer tell how it used to be. This year ROH is June 2 and 3.

The purpose of Affirming the Commitment is to help employees better understand and appreciate veterans and their military service. Over 400 employees volunteer at Reclaiming Our Heritage. These employees have the opportunity to engage and interact with reenactors of all the major military eras, from Revolutionary times to the

present day. The event also honors OIF/OEF soldiers and their families.

New in 2007 will be a demonstration of wheelchair sports. This demonstration will help publicize the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games coming to Milwaukee a few weeks later on June 19-23.

Reclaiming Our Heritage is dedicated to helping all who participate better understand the key roles that veterans have in our society and culture. More information about Reclaiming Our Heritage can be found at this address: <http://www.milwaukee.va.gov/ROH/>

North Chicago

Mandatory Training Fair



The North Chicago VA presented a Mandatory Training Fair, Thursday, February 15th and Thursday, February 22nd, 2007 from 6 AM – 6 PM. This was a great opportunity for employees to get their mandatory education hours in and have a great time while learning! Employees received education credit hours during their one time attendance toward mandatory education requirements!

Tomah

VITA Program Is In Full Swing

It's definitely tax-time! The volunteers in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program have completed

nearly fifty (50) tax returns since opening the first week of February.

The VITA program is located in the old Nautilus room in the VA Gym. Thanks to a lot of work by Facilities Service and Information Technology Service staff, the new office looks like a "real" tax office!



The volunteers who prepare taxes have all been certified through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and tax returns are prepared on the IRS's on-line software, "Tax-Wise."

The VITA program is available to VA staff, volunteers, patients and the general community, provided the tax refund is basic in nature. Individuals who own or operate businesses are not eligible to receive services by VITA volunteers.

Annual Valentine Cake

The annual Valentine Cake was made by Sue Brueggeman of Nutrition and Food Service. Each year's design is different.



The cake was served by the Cranberry Royalty on Wednesday during the patient's lunch hour. On previous page, left to right: Stan Johnson, medical center Director; Elizabeth Murdock, Cranberry Festival Queen; and Princesses Devyn Prielipp and Tia Hewuse.

Below is the cake before it was cut and served! The special ingredients are provided through VA Voluntary Services with donated funds. Four custom-made cake pans were made many years ago by the metal shop at the facility for this annual heart-shaped cake.



2007 Veterans Art Competition



Meghan Coffey, Miss Wisconsin, helped present the awards. Almost 90 pieces of art were entered in the

competition and the main dining room was packed with veterans and their families as they anxiously waited to see how they did in the competition.

Bob Hammer's sculpture, "Bird on Water," was selected as the "People's Choice." Pictured previous column, left to right: Stan Johnson, medical center Director; Bob Hammer; Miss Wisconsin; Glenda Busby, Help Hospitalized Veterans and Pat Flanders, American Legion Auxiliary.

Veterans Suicide Prevention Awareness Day

Medical centers throughout VISN 12 observed the first annual Suicide Prevention Awareness Day on March 1. Events for staff and mental health professionals, veterans' advocates and other interested individuals were held across the network.

One event included a satellite broadcast from VA Central Office that addressed VA's focus on suicide prevention as a national priority. At Tomah VA a grand rounds titled, "Suicide, It's Everyone's Business," was led by Dr. David Houlihan, Chief of Staff.

A panel consisting of mental health professionals addressed questions from the audience concerning warning signs of suicide, the role of the Vet Center in helping veterans and their families, and the VA's work at demobilization events for our newest veterans to let them know what services are available to them from VA.



Pictured above are the panel members at Tomah VA Medical Center: 1SGT David Patterson of Fort McCoy's Behavioral Health; Dr. David Houlihan, Chief of Staff; VA Chaplain, Maynard Hofer; Jeanne Button, Mental Health Triage and OIF/OEF Coordinator; Dorri Carskadon, from the Vet Center in Madison; and Diane Wilson, Performance Improvement Department.

Suicide prevention is an extremely important and high profile concern throughout the VA system. Overall in the U.S., approximately 1 out of 4 people who complete suicide is a veteran. This alarming fact drives home the need to prevent this behavior especially in our veteran population.

In Milwaukee, Glen Grippen, medical center Director and Richard Gibson, MD, mental health division manager introduced the topic and welcomed the audience of almost 150 staff, veterans and members of the community.

The full afternoon program consisted of the VA Central Office satellite broadcast, followed by a live panel discussion of seven local staff and two grand round presentations. The panel included representatives from various areas of the medical center (e.g., Vet Center, OIF/OEF, mental health, and women's issues).

The grand rounds program focused on current research initiatives. Michelle Cornett, PhD, chair of the Milwaukee VA Suicide Prevention Committee, presented recent research advances in a presentation entitled: "Examining Risk Factors for Veteran Suicide." Ann Christiansen assistant director of the Injury Research Center from the Medical College of Wisconsin presented the status of recently funded research projects.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide is a major, preventable public health problem. In 2004, it was the eleventh leading cause of death in the U.S., accounting for 32,439 deaths. The overall rate was 10.9 suicide deaths per 100,000 people. An estimated eight to 25 attempted suicides occur per every suicide death. Suicidal behavior is complex. Some risk factors vary with age, gender, or ethnic group and may occur in combination or change over time.

Preventative measures are not as simple as providing medication or a "help line." Comprehensive and system-wide measures are necessary to address the need for informing veterans and their families of the help available at the VA. That help is screening for warning signs, implementation of actions when the screen is positive, mental health inpatient safety and for all providers and direct contact staff to be able to handle a suicide crisis

24/7. These are only a few of the many areas that need to be addressed on an ongoing basis to fight this deadly behavior.

What should I do if I think someone is suicidal? If you think someone is suicidal, do not leave him or her alone. Try to get the person to seek immediate help from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital emergency room or call 911. Eliminate access to firearms or other potential tools for suicide, including unsupervised access to medications.

Network Awards/ Recognition

Iron Mountain

Cost Saving Suggestion Reaps Recognition



L-R Top: Art Ontto, Chief, Engineering Service, Janice M. Boss, medical center Director, James D. Mitchell, Supply Technician, and Dave Provencher, Maintenance Foreman Supervisor.

Janice M. Boss, VA Iron Mountain Medical Center Director recognizes James D. Mitchell, VAMC Supply Technician, for his cost-saving suggestion. Mr. Mitchell's suggestion is estimated at saving the facility \$50,000. VAMC Iron Mountain will replace the single function fax machines and personal computer printers with a multifunctional copier. This suggestion not only saves

the facility money, but also meets the facility mission outlined in the Green Environmental Management Program. This program focuses on energy conservation and waste from use of toner cartridges.

James Mitchell began working for the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center in October of 2004. Mitchell is also a graduate of the Iron Mountain VA Employee Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability Development (LEAD) Program.

The LEAD program was created to provide leadership training for employees capable of achieving high levels of individual and organizational performance in order to meet future needs within the facility.

Madison

Hands and Heart Recipient Saves Limbs

Greta Crawley, Prosthetic/Orthotic Assistant – Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service, was recently honored as Madison’s Hands and Heart recipient. Ms. Crawley has become known by the patients and staff as the “shoe lady,” having honed her skills in fabricating and modifying shoes and orthotics with the goal of saving limbs. Many veterans attribute Ms. Crawley’s interventions for saving their feet, their legs and their lives, saying the services she provides are invaluable.



Ms. Crawley has been providing care for our veterans for over 30 years. She began her tenure in the Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Service as a volunteer. Given her attributes as a warm, caring, energetic person, staff encouraged her to become an employee. She became a VA employee in 1974. Since the start, she has developed a reputation across the facility as someone who can get the job done, and does it with compassion, enthusiasm, and creativity.

“I enjoy coming to work everyday. I really take pleasure in working with patients and seeing them get good results, getting their foot ulcers healed and getting them in regular diabetic shoes, avoiding amputations. I greatly enjoy having past patients stop back to let me know how they are doing, and I always encourage them to call immediately if they encounter problems. I especially enjoy the staff I work with, they are wonderful.” said Ms. Crawley.

Ms. Crawley is a wonderful example of a health care provider who opens her heart to others and the lives of many.

Tomah

Clinical Excellence Award Recipient



Douglas J. Lanska, M.D. is the recipient of the annual Clinical Excellence Award. The award is presented to a clinician that demonstrates the following criteria: best care possible, compliance with bylaws, veteran

satisfaction, forward movement of the mission, excellent interaction with staff, innovation, medical education, professionalism, efficiency and service. Award recipients are selected by their peers. Congratulations Dr. Lanska!

Volunteers Are Recognized Too!

Annette Phillips, Logistics Manager at Tomah VA, recognized four volunteers with Value-Grams in January.

The volunteers routinely assemble and mail the monthly Voluntary Service newsletter. Until recently, when the Media Center copied the newsletters, they would staple the pages together in the upper left hand corner, then, when the volunteers sent the letters, they would fold them in half and staple them.



Receiving recognition for this cost-saving work were, left to right, Flo Taylor, Stacy Wiegert, Ken Macklin, and Cathy Eldridge.

Tomah VA recently established a contract with the La Crosse Mail Center to presort the mail by zip code which saved the VA three cents on every 1st class letter. However, due to the possibility of scratching the optical lens that reads the address, they were unable to run any mail through at the lower rate if it contained a staple. The volunteers were asked to use stickers to hold the newsletters together. This change makes the assembly process slower and a bit more cumbersome for the volunteers, but in true volunteer fashion, the process was changed without complaint.

Using stickers versus staples significantly contributes to Tomah VAMC's saving of over \$3700 in the past five months.

Madison Honors Tomah DAV Volunteer Van Driver for His Honesty and Integrity



At the Madison VA Jim Cornell, Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Volunteer Van Driver from Tomah, transports patients to Madison each Monday. Mr. Cornell recently found \$151 in cash in a Madison VA hallway near the Agent Cashier's Office and turned it in. The patient that lost the money was eventually located and was delighted to get his money back. Above, Allen Ackers, VA Madison's Acting Director, recognized Mr. Cornell for his honesty and integrity and presented him with a gift card.

CARES Update

Jesse Brown Bed Tower Construction

Construction of the new bed tower at Jesse Brown VAMC is over 80 percent complete and is expected to open in January 2008. The \$99 million addition will include 200 inpatient beds, seven operating rooms and a cystology room.



JBVAMC's new inpatient bed tower is over 80 percent complete and is expected to open in January 2008.

The bed tower was funded as part of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) decision that resulted in the integration of inpatient beds from the Lakeside VA to JBVAMC in 2003. CARES is part of a nation-wide effort to reduce the number of outdated VA facilities and provide services more cost efficiently.



Phase I of the project to expand and modernize JBVAMC's Emergency Services Department (seen here) was completed last year and Phase II will be finished in April. The project has doubled the size of the medical center's Emergency Room with a design that offers more patient privacy and enhances staff efficiency.

CARES also provided funding to expand the medical center's Emergency Room and modernizes many of its ancillary services, including Radiology, Nutrition, Dental and Laboratory. Radiology inpatient services are being relocated to the ground floor to provide great proximity to the new bed tower.

Phase I of the Emergency Services construction project was completed last year and Phase II will be finished this month. The new design provides for 15 separate treatment rooms in an oval "racetrack" design surrounding a central nursing station.

VA/DoD Partnership

VA Secretary & Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee Visit to See How Partnership is Progressing

At the request of Congressman Bob Filner, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, both he and Secretary Nicholson visited North Chicago VAMC on March 2 to see firsthand what is taking place with the VA/DoD Partnership between North Chicago VAMC (NCVAMC) and Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes (NHCGL).



VA Secretary Jim Nicholson reviews a row of recruits during their graduation ceremony at Naval Training Center Great Lakes.

The Secretary started his day by being the Reviewing Officer at the Navy Recruit Training Command Graduation Ceremony at Great Lakes Naval Base. He spoke to 7 graduating divisions totaling 475 new sailors with an audience of over 1,500 family members and friends. In the Secretary's comments he stated, "Today marks not only the beginning of a great journey of military service through your selfless commitment to America...it also marks the beginning of America's commitment to you as the defenders of liberty and freedom." Secretary Nicholson also thanked the families that attended saying, "I offer heartfelt thank you, for sharing your loved ones with the Nation they are now proud to serve." Following the ceremony, Secretary Nicholson met with a few of the honored recruits and their families, before moving on to North Chicago VAMC where he met up with Congressman Filner.



VA Secretary Jim Nicholson congratulates honored recruits after graduation ceremony naval basic training.

The Secretary and Congressman were given a briefing by Patrick Sullivan, medical center Director, NCVAMC and Captain Tom McGue, Commanding Officer, NHCGL. The briefing highlighted the accomplishments that NCVAMC & NHCGL have achieved so far with the Partnership. Following the briefing they toured the new emergency and surgery spaces that were part of the \$13 million VA renovation/expansion project that was completed June 2006, at which time Navy shifted inpatient medicine, emergency and surgery services to North Chicago.

The final stop on the tour was a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new MRI. VA & Navy were able to jointly purchase the MRI through the VA/DoD Joint Incentive Fund (JIF) program. This all came about through the FY 2003 National Defense Authorization Act, Public Law 107-314, Section 721, requires that DoD and VA establish a joint incentive program, through the creation of a DoD-VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund. The intent of the program is to identify, fund and evaluate creative local, regional and national sharing initiatives. There is a minimum contribution of \$15 million by each Department each year for four years (FY 2004-FY 2007). Total minimum contributions from each Department will be \$60 million, with a combined total of \$120 million over the four years. Through the JIF program, NCVAMC & NHCGL will now have 24/7 MRI services for their beneficiaries instead of sharing a mobile MRI Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The following are the JIF proposals totaling \$9 million that NCVAMC & NHCGL have been able to get approved: women's health clinic, mammography unit, MRI, oncology, hospitalist, digital radiography (PACS), projected management support, and dedicated fiber optic connectivity.



Left to right – Patrick Sullivan, medical center Director; VA Secretary Jim Nicholson; Korean & WWII veteran Johnnie Allen; HM3 Pante; Congressman Bob Filner; RDLM Gintzig, Deputy Commander, Navy Medicine East; and Captain Thomas McGue, Commanding Officer, NHCGL cut the ribbon on a new MRI suite that VA and Navy will share as they continue to expand their Partnership.

After the tour, Secretary Nicholson said, "This is an excellent facility that provides the best health care possible for our active duty military, their family members and of course our veterans."

The last phase of the Partnership will include a \$130 million military construction project that will include an ambulatory care center, parking garage, surface parking and renovations to existing space at NCVAMC. Target for completion is June 2010.

Someone You Should Know

New Associate Director for Patient/ Nursing Services



A new member has recently joined the North Chicago VA Medical Center leadership staff. Ms. Mary Ann Cardinali was appointed as the Associate Director for Patient/Nursing Services on January 7, 2007. As the Associate Director, Patient Services/Nurse Executive, Ms. Cardinali is responsible for the direction, control, coordination and evaluation of programs and units within Mental Health, Skilled Geriatric Rehabilitation, Intensive

Medicine and ICU, as well as Ancillary Services (which include Pharmacy/SPD, Audiology/Speech Pathology, Nutrition & Food, and Chaplain Services). Prior to this appointment at the North Chicago VAMC, Ms. Cardinali was the Associate Director for Patient Care Services at Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System. Ms. Cardinali was born and raised in the Kenosha area, a graduate of St. Joseph High School. She is a veteran who served 26 years in the United States Air Force, and is a retired colonel. Ms. Cardinali has held a variety of health care positions with the Department of Defense and with private healthcare organizations. Ms. Cardinali received a Diploma of Nursing from St. Lukes School of Nursing in Racine, Wisconsin. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Care Management from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, IL and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing/Psychology from Loretto Heights College in Denver, CO. She obtained a Master of Arts Degree in Health Care Management from Webster University in St. Louis, MO and a Master of Science Degree in Nursing Administration/Research from St. Louis University in St. Louis, MO. It is indeed a pleasure to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Cardinali.

National Salute to Hospitalized Vets Week

Across VISN 12 medical centers and VA employees took part in National Salute to Hospitalized Vets Week. Thousands of valentines were delivered to Hines this year during the week long National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week celebration. Many school groups, veterans service organizations and numerous other organizations made special valentines for the veterans and visited the facility in person to deliver these most appreciated valentines. Inpatients received gifts and visits courtesy of Voluntary Service and valentine decorations could be found throughout the facility.

At the VA Iron Mountain medical center, the Director presented patients with a token of appreciation. This year each veteran was presented with a commemorative pin and valentines made by school children. Each veteran also received a copy of "Letters to Ed" the memoirs of Clyde Devine a patient in the VA medical center.



Above; William Mellgren and Janice Boss, Director, Iron Mountain VAMC

Meanwhile, at the Jesse Brown VA, seven-year-old violin prodigy Max Lulich was the special guest of honor when the medical center kicked off its National Salute on February 12th. Max began taking violin lessons when he was only 21 months old and has been featured on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune*, interviewed by *Jet Magazine* and invited to play “The Star Spangled Banner” for both the Chicago Cubs and the Chicago White Sox. At JBVAMC, he played a series of classical pieces, as well as the National Anthem, before finishing with “Happy Birthday to You” to honor the birth date of President Abraham Lincoln.



Max Lulich, age 7, performed a series of classical pieces on the violin for a packed audience, including members of the Jesse Brown VA Chorus, during the kick-off ceremony for the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans.



Members of the UW Spirit Squad.

Patients at VA Madison were treated to an abundance of bedside visitors. Strong support of the event from the University of Wisconsin (UW) Athletic Department included Bo Ryan, Men’s Basketball Coach, along with his wife, as they visited patients for over 2½ hours. The UW Spirit Squad visitors included mascot Bucky Badger, 31 cheerleaders, and 14 dance team members. Active duty Marines, R.O.T.C. members, service organization officials, and the Knights of Columbus Clowns were additional visitors that were greatly appreciated by the patients.



Above, Knights of Columbus Clowns.

Over 2,500 valentines, cards and letters poured in to North Chicago VA from area students. Local schools including St. Mary’s in Lake Forest visited patient wards to personally hand out valentines and treats. The kids

from the Milburn 4-H club and the Northeast Illinois Federation of Labor sponsored bingos. Mayors Dick Hyde of Waukegan and Leon Rockingham Jr. of North Chicago, Admiral Jon Bayless, and Great Lakes Naval Station Commanding Officer Captain R J. Postera visited various wards to personally thank each vet for what they did for our country. Pizza parties were sponsored on all of the wards by Community Affairs and by the VA Voluntary Service volunteers.



Captain Postera with the students from St. Mary's school.

27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games Update

In a few weeks, athletes will begin arriving in Milwaukee for the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, June 19-23. The Games are presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Paralyzed Veterans of America and hosted by Milwaukee's Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center and the Wisconsin Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

"To put on an event of such magnitude requires much support – from everyone," explained Dean Martell, who with Ken Lee, MD, are co-chairs. At the beginning of the fund raising, a challenge was given to Mr. Martell, Dr. Lee and Games coordinator, Brian Walker (affectionately known as *The Three Amigos*). The offer was made by the members of the Wheelchair Games Employee Association. "If we raise \$40,000," said Patricia Horn,

PhD, "could we shave their heads." It was a great incentive.

The challenge was made months ago as the leaves were falling from the trees. "It seemed like a very low risk at the time," admitted Mr. Martell sitting in his small office last week with a few gray buds popping out of his nearly naked scalp.

"The monies have been raised through a lot of hard work," affirmed Dr. Horn. For the past several months, the Wheelchair Games Employee Association has sponsored a motorcycle rally, spaghetti dinner, ice cream sales and gift baskets. In the future, there will be more gift baskets and ice cream sales, a golf outing and a dance. It is predicted that the monies will pass the \$40,000 mark.

"The enthusiasm for the Games by the members of the Wheelchair Games Employee Association and Medical Center employees is phenomenal," said Mr. Martell. "They have doubled the gold level of giving. It is worth losing our hair over."

Ken Lee, MD, Brian Walker and Dean Martell have their hair cut for a \$40,000 donation. The money raised by the Wheelchair Games Employee Association will be used to help in underwriting the Games. *The Three Amigos* came through, and at the conclusion of the third Games site visit, had their unique cuts before an appreciative audience in the Medical Center's auditorium.





Fulfilling America's Pledge



We thank our employees and volunteers for delivering the best in health care to veterans.
Our mission gives us the great privilege of serving those who bravely serve our nation.



U.S. News and World Report

July 2005
"Today's VA Hospitals are models of Top-Notch Care."

NBC Nightly News

March 2006
"The transformation of America's VA hospitals has been so dramatic that now the question is why can't all hospitals be this good."

Fortune

May 2006
"The seamless integration of science, information, and compassion is the dream of modern health care. Scenes like these are not fantasies, however, but daily realities at the Veterans Health Administration."

Business Week

July 2006
"VA hospitals and clinics have been ranked best-in-class by a number of independent groups on a broad range of measures."

TIME

September 2006
"Most private hospitals can only dream of the futuristic medicine Dr. Divya Shroff (of the Washington VA Medical Center) practices today."

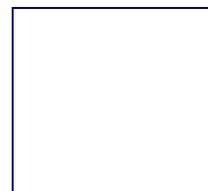
CBS Evening News

December 2006
"In studies, including one by Harvard, and in six straight years of patient satisfaction surveys, VA earned the highest health care quality rating in the country. It's also the least expensive.... Today's VA looks like the future."



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